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AUTHOR Murphy, Harry J.; Loving, Steven D.
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ABSTRACT

In the future, postsecondary institutions must respond in nontraditional ways to disabled students' needs for physical accessibility to campus facilities and cultural accessibility to campus activities, both social and academic. The development of innovative services will require an entrepreneurial approach and should look upon the provision of disabled student services from a "marketing" point of view. California State University, Northridge, has added a number of nonmandated activities to its Office of Disabled Student Services which are products of a marketing approach model and are supported by outside funding: (1) a computer access lab; (2) a theater group; (3) a student leadership group; (4) conferences on the arts, computer technology, and learning disabilities; (5) a learning disabled program; and (6) a National Aeronautics and Space Administration grant to promote hiring of qualified disabled "high-tech" graduates. Administrators seeking to follow the marketing approach will find several elements crucial to their success. They will have to cultivate funding sources to obtain necessary resources, tap the tremendous potential of technological advances, expand staff training opportunities, and develop administrative policies to accommodate the entrepreneurial approach. (VW)

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Postsecondary Educational Support Services for the 21st Century

by

Harry J. Murphy

and

Steven D. Loving

Office of Disabled Student Services
California State University, Northridge

A Paper Presented at The Council For Exceptional Children
Conference On The Future of Special Education

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

by

Harry J. Murphy
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Steven D. Loving

Introduction

Postsecondary institutions are mandated by federal and state law to provide certain "mandated" services. Among these are interpreting, reading, notetaking, tutoring, registration assistance and other related services. Most colleges and universities provide only mandated services and little else. This is not enough to get the job done. The college or university of the future must make a commitment to blending mandated and non-mandated services together to create a rich and successful environment for the disabled student.

This future environment will encompass both those activities "that must be done" (a limited number of legislated and funded activities) and those activities that should be done (non-mandated and unfunded) in order to completely serve students with disabilities. Try as he or she might, the administrator of the future will increasingly find that mandated program dollars will not meet the needs of a dynamic support service program for the 21st century. Like it or not, the administrator of the future will be more of a fundraiser than he/she is now.

A Changing Style of Program Management

Simply put, postsecondary support service programs in the 21st century will place an emphasis upon developing and maintaining non-traditional programs while continuing the traditional services necessary to meet disabled student needs. These non-traditional programs will be fueled by a desire on the part of disabled students to move from mere "physical" accessibility on the campus, to a "cultural" accessibility of all campus activities both social and academic.

While it is hoped that mandated funding will continue to support "physical" accessibility (which includes the traditional services), the development of new and innovative "non-traditional" services will require a new approach. This approach will be more "entrepreneurial" in spirit and look upon the provision of disabled student services from a "marketing" point of view.

In such a marketing scenario the "producer" is the disabled student program and the "consumers" are many: disabled students, faculty and staff, the local professional and lay community, funding sources, potential employers of persons who are disabled, professional colleagues in colleges and universities and professional associations such as The Council For Exceptional Children.

The basic purpose of marketing is to let the consumers know of the products and services of the disabled students office in order to benefit from them. Two primary objectives of marketing are to attract more and better qualified disabled students and more and better qualified program staff. The more these two groups know about a program's activities and services, the more likely it is that positive results will occur.

A marketing approach is therefore "multi-directional". It is not simply the giving of support services to disabled students. It encourages an exchange of programs, activities and services between a disabled student services program and a host of "consumers" both on and off the campus. Most importantly, a marketing approach allows for the development and funding of non-traditional and non-mandated activities.

The Results of a "Marketing Approach"

At California State University, Northridge, a number of non-mandated activities have been added to the Office of Disabled Student Services (all of which must be supported by outside funding). These include:

-- **a computer access lab.** Disabled students have access to terminals with such special peripherals as braille printers, speech input and output devices, and single switch technology. By increasing the computer literacy among students with disability we are able to promote academic success and increase employment placement potential.

-- **theatre group.** Disabled students have formed a mainstream theatre group and have performed such plays as "The Odd Couple," "Barefoot in the Park," and "The Glass

Menagerie" on-campus and in community theatres. Students have "marketed" these productions in such a manner to raise funds for their own student organization and various civic clubs as well.

-- **student leadership group.** The Disabled Students Organization has formed a leadership group committed to service to the university and the community. Out of this, disabled students have made commitments to serve on all-university boards, such as Associated Students and the University Student Union.

-- **conferencing.** CSUN is host to three major conferences: (1) An Arts Festival which draws 1,000 persons, (2) a "Computer Technology/Special Education/Rehabilitation" conference which draws 1,000 persons from around the world, and (3) a conference on "Adults with Learning Disabilities" which draws 400 persons. This reflects a strong commitment to sharing information with parents, disabled persons, the community and colleagues.

-- **a learning disabled program** with a emphasis on upper division and graduate students. A grant has been secured to work with a growing population (140+) of learning disabled students. Because CSUN is a BA/MA institution, a decision was made to create programming emphasizing work within major fields and graduate level programs. Upper division and graduate non-LD peers have been trained as "Educational Support Specialists" to work under two Ph.D.'s (with doctorates in learning disability) to support these students. Much work is done with computers as a "compensatory" technique.

-- **a NASA grant to promote the hiring** of qualified disabled "high-tech" graduates throughout the postsecondary systems of California. The grant provides for the implementation of a Networking Conference in 1988 to bring together NASA, Department of Rehabilitation, California State University, and the University of California. The conference will endeavor to develop ways of identifying qualified disabled students as potential NASA employees, and help to formulate specific hiring quotas for NASA.

All of these activities represent "non-traditional" program events that will be a commonplace occurrence for the postsecondary educational support service program in the 21st century. They are the product of a "marketing approach" model for student services and they are supported by outside funding sources.

Of equal importance, these activities represent attempts to gain "cultural" accessibility for students with disability. We are already past the time when postsecondary programs for disabled students can rest solely on the laurels of curb cuts, ramps, lowered drinking fountains, and reader services. While issues of such "physical" accessibility will always remain important to students with disability, they are relatively passe compared to a program which promotes the performance of a disabled university student before a community civic group. The challenge to 21st century programs will be to provide opportunities that allow disabled students to demonstrate their talents and abilities far beyond the boundaries of the university.

Keys to Success for 21st Century Programs

Taking the long-range view, programs that promote and foster "cultural" accessibility in addition to "physical" accessibility for students with disability will be the order of the day in the 21st century. They will come to adopt a "marketing strategy" to expand the vocational, social, and economic horizons of their students. Administrators of these programs will find the following elements crucial to their success:

(1) RESOURCES

The expanded role of programs in assisting their students to achieve "cultural" accessibility will come with a pricetag beyond the capability of the institutional budget alone. As mentioned previously, program administrators will spend more time as fundraisers.

There is no secret to success with funding sources. The most successful programs have come to realize that personal contact with funding sources is probably the most important variable in securing grants. This creates an obligation on program managers to create relationships with funding sources: individuals, corporations, foundations, campus groups and governmental bodies.

Trips to funding sources mean travel and travel means money. Sophisticated marketers know that "It takes a buck to make a buck." Therefore, program managers need to have the backing of their administration and/or some other means to travel to funding sources whether they are across town or across the country.

Finally, it is important to remember that marketing "pays off" with funding sources in the less tangible ways of giving and gathering information and in the more concrete way of funding for needed programs.

(2) TECHNOLOGY

There is little doubt that technology will continue to play an important role in the development of disabled students. In the past twenty-five years, technological advances in biomedical, rehabilitation engineering and computer development have, for example, allowed quadriplegics to survive for years rather than months, and provided artificial limbs of remarkable functional ability to amputees. Microcomputers and simple word processing programs allow learning disabled students to gain some control of the written word after years of frustration in coping with perceptual deficits.

If the past twenty-five years can be used as a yardstick for technological advancement, the next twenty-five years hold a great deal of promise for the disabled student. For example, the development of the personal computer, specialized peripherals, and telecommunication links holds untold potential for the severely disabled homebound student of 1987 who cannot attend a university in the traditional manner.

One thing is for certain. The cost of "operationalizing" new technology into the hands, mouthsticks, and special peripherals of disabled students will most certainly strain the annual budgets of student service programs. For example, startup costs for CSUN's Computer Access Lab have amounted to more than $100,000 in staffing and equipment costs.

(3) PERSONNEL PREPARATION

Program administrators and their staff will be challenged to maintain an ever increasing level of traditional support services while developing outside funding sources to fund new and innovative programs that the annual budget was never designed to support. For example, the number of disabled students served at CSUN has risen from 350 in 1980-81 to more than 550 in 1987-88. In the past three years the number of learning disabled students has climbed from less than 50 in 1984 to more than 140 in 1987. In addition, the program operates on a two-year delayed funding cycle; that is, the program will not receive budget allocations for current students until the 1989-90 academic year.

All of this causes the staff to wear many "hats" while the budget catches up to a level that is able to provide additional staff, equipment and space. Program staff need to be aware of available resources on and off campus to help meet student needs. For example, academic departments may help find temporary space to test disabled students, while student volunteers from clubs and fraternities can help to proctor mid-terms and finals at peak demand times.

Staff retreats, in-service training sessions, and the fostering of a "sense of community" within the program go a long way to help meet the increased demand for student services with limited

budget dollars. Most of all, comments of appreciation from disabled students themselves are the greatest motivator to keep the program moving ahead.

(4) POLICY

Institutional commitment to disabled student programs will be absolutely necessary for postsecondary support programs in the 21st century. The Program Manager of a disabled student services program will require an administrative policy that understands the needs of a "marketing strategy" for student service programs and one that is supportive of the expenditures necessary to encourage its growth.

Seed money for developmental programs and matching funds for new grant-funded service programs will be the order of the day for the 21st century program. While the program itself will be expected to generate funds from "outside funding sources", the participation of campus based funding sources including student government, foundation and alumni sources will go a long way in raising the funds necessary to create a rich and successful environment for the disabled student.

In summary, postsecondary educational support programs will become more entrepreneurial in their approach to funding non-mandated programs. These programs will tend to focus attention toward increased "cultural" accessibility and allow disabled students to showcase their talents and abilities. In this process, "attitudinal barriers" towards stereotyped limitations associated with disability will become increasingly obsolete. University trained graduates with disability will take their rightful place as productive citizens as a matter of course rather than exception.